

THE BYZANTINE BACKGROUND OF THE MORAVIAN MISSION

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BYZANTINE culture, the most highly developed of its time, had a great power of radiation. In its expansion it embraced the whole Mediterranean world, taking in the European, Asian, and African shores. It penetrated deep into the interior of the European continent. While the movement was on the whole a constant one, there were periods of conspicuous advances and also times of recession. The second half of the ninth century witnessed the most marked advance; in addition, it was a period of particularly intensive missionary activity—the most effective form of Byzantine cultural penetration. I should like to examine here the conditions and the causes of this development.

The Moravian mission of Constantine and Methodius extended Byzantine religious and cultural influences to a remote Slavic country in the center of Europe. This is an impressive and spectacular manifestation of Byzantine religious and cultural expansion. The real and unique greatness of the Moravian mission, however, lies not so much in its achievements in Moravia proper, as in the outstanding and far-reaching results achieved by the work of Constantine and Methodius beyond the Moravian border. By creating a Slavonic alphabet, which made possible the development of Slavic writing and literature, the brothers from Thessalonica opened up a new era in the cultural life of numerous Slavic peoples. This is why the whole civilized world is celebrating the eleven hundredth anniversary of the achievement of the “Apostles of the Slavs.”

However, except for the remarkable results it achieved, the Moravian mission viewed as a missionary enterprise, was not an uncommon activity at this time, much less an isolated one. It was only one link in a major historical process, one of a series of similar undertakings that were characteristic of the policy of the Byzantine Empire at the time. Byzantium was then consolidating her existing relations and establishing new relations with peoples in the extensive territory inhabited by the Slavs. In a short interval of time—a single decade—very important contacts were cemented between the Byzantine Empire and the various Slavic countries, southern, eastern, and western. These contacts had widespread consequences both for the Slavs and for Byzantium. After the Russian attack on Constantinople in 860, Byzantine missionary activity began in the young Russian state. In 863 the Moravian prince Rastislav requested Byzantium to send missionaries to his country. The next year saw Bulgaria officially accept Christianity. A few years later, the Serbian lands turned to Byzantine Orthodox Christianity. In 869–70 the problem of the Bulgarian Church was finally settled at the Council of Constantinople: Bulgaria together with Macedonia—which was soon to become the main center of Slavic culture—was included within the religious and cultural orbit of By-

zantium. All these events occurred in the course of a single decade, the sixties of the ninth century. It was indeed a great decade in the history of the Byzantine Empire.

What were the reasons for the powerful influence exerted by Byzantine culture upon the Slavic world at that particular time? To answer this question we must carefully study the historical situation of this epoch, and, above all, examine the development of the previous centuries which led up to it. We shall undertake such an analysis and endeavor to discover the historical roots both of the Moravian mission and of the other major achievements of this great decade.

There are periods in the secular history of a state when a completely new and clearly perceptible trend takes shape. After a radical reorientation at the beginning of the seventh century, the Byzantine Empire experienced the next turning point in its history in the middle of the ninth century. At the turn of the sixth century, its social and economic system—a survival from the late Roman Empire—underwent a deep crisis, followed by serious internal and external upheavals. In the seventh century (I discussed this problem at the Dumbarton Oaks symposium seven years ago) the economic and social foundations of the Empire were changing: the administrative and military organization was set up on a new basis; and the image of the Empire, both political and cultural, was recast. Thanks to this internal renovation, Byzantium succeeded in overcoming the crisis, but only after a long and strenuous struggle. Throughout the whole of the seventh and eighth centuries, Byzantium had to fight for her survival, defending herself against the invasions of enemies which threatened her very existence. Avars and Slavs flooded the Balkan Peninsula and, in 626, launched an assault against Constantinople, while from the other side the Persians appeared before the Byzantine capital. In the 670's the Arabs, after conquering nearer Asia and Egypt, besieged Constantinople for five long years during which time the existence of the Empire hung by a thread. In 717–18 a new siege, which once more had led to a critical situation, ended with the defeat of the enemy. Although the Byzantine Empire halted the Arab invasion at the walls of the capital and on the very threshold of Europe, it continued to be under almost constant pressure and threat from the Arabs. To this danger the menace of the young Bulgarian State in the Balkans was eventually added, and during the reign of Khan Krum, at the beginning of the ninth century, this menace became critical. A change, however, took place in the second half of the ninth century. In 863 Petronas, brother of Caesar Bardas, achieved a victory of far-reaching consequences over the Arabs in Asia Minor. To be sure, battles, fierce and varying in their outcome, continued to take place, but thenceforth the Byzantines more and more often took the initiative. Indeed, Petronas' victory of 863 represented a turn of the tide in the wars between Byzantium and the Arabs, and foreshadowed the subsequent triumphant expansion of the Byzantine Empire in the East.

The struggle with the Arabs greatly influenced the situation in the European sectors, especially in the Balkan Peninsula, and they have had, therefore, to be

taken into consideration here. The difficulties it encountered in the East paralyzed the Empire in the Balkans, while successes on the eastern front strengthened its position and facilitated its activities in the north. At a decisive moment, one year after Petronas' victory in eastern Asia Minor, Byzantium intervened in the Balkans with the utmost determination and effectiveness, and by means of her armed forces compelled Bulgaria to sever her alliance with the Franks and to accept Christianity from Constantinople.

The situation in the Balkans is of special importance in dealing with our problem; we shall, henceforth, have to devote particular attention to the events that took place there, beginning with the migration of the Southern Slavs. A massive immigration of Slavic tribes into the entire Balkan Peninsula shook Byzantine power from the Danube to the southern extremity of Greece. Byzantium maintained her position only in a number of cities—mainly coastal ones. The full scope of the disaster suffered by Byzantium in the Balkans at that time is often overlooked because Byzantine administration there was not replaced by any other organized state authority. Whole territories, until then under the control of the Byzantine Empire, fell into the hands of Slavic tribes. The Balkan peninsula was transformed into a number of *Sclaviniae*—as Byzantine sources call the regions occupied by the Slavs. These regions were actually seized by the Slavs and were, in fact, removed from Byzantine political control, but they were not endowed with their own state organization. The Balkan Peninsula was indeed lost to Byzantium, yet the fiction of Byzantine sovereignty could still be maintained.

Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in his celebrated treatise on foreign policy, strongly insisted on the supreme right of the Byzantine Empire in the Balkan lands. Modern historians, too, devote much attention to the question of how far Byzantine sovereignty was accepted in those countries. This approach, however, does not provide the key to the true political relationships in the Balkans. Formal recognition of the Empire's supreme rights did not represent real subordination to Byzantine authority. Actual Byzantine control existed only in those localities where the military and administrative apparatus was functioning. In contemporary terms, this meant that it prevailed wherever themes were established: themes were the new military administrative system introduced by Byzantium in her provinces beginning with the seventh-century revival.

I emphasized this view in one of my previous papers, delivered at the Dumbarton Oaks Symposium in 1957.¹ I am compelled here to repeat certain points, this time in a different perspective, because they are essential to an understanding of the situation in the Balkan Peninsula after the migration of the Slavs. On the earlier occasion we were interested in the conditions created in the seventh century. Now we are concerned with their subsequent development. Formerly our primary task was to draw attention to the true extent of the disorganization of Byzantine power after the catastrophe that befell the Empire

¹ G. Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Empire in the World of the Seventh Century," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 13 (1959), 1 ff.

in the Balkans during the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Now our main task is to consider when and how Byzantium succeeded in overcoming the crisis and in re-establishing her authority in certain Balkan regions.

The development of the theme system in the Balkan Peninsula has been described in detail in important works by Dvornik, Kyriakides, and Lemerle.² Continuing their research, I have tried to shed light on this problem from a new viewpoint. In my opinion, the establishment of themes in the Balkans was a process identical with that of the Byzantine reoccupation of certain areas in the peninsula.³ It is known—Constantine Porphyrogenitus stated so himself, and documentary sources confirm the fact—that the first theme in the Balkans was organized only about the year 680, in the district closest to the capital, i.e., in Thrace.⁴ Some ten years later, the theme of Hellas was created, embracing central Greece.⁵ These were the only two areas in which Byzantium at this time succeeded in reorganizing her administrative apparatus. What is more important is that the process of establishing Byzantine rule in the Balkans, which started with the creation of these two themes, limited in area and situated far apart, was arrested for a long time. Not one new theme was set up in the Balkans during the next hundred years. Until almost the end of the eighth century Byzantium failed to bring any other Balkan region into her military-administrative system. Then, suddenly, a change took place. Slow and sluggish for two centuries following the Slavic immigration, the process of reorganizing Byzantine power in the Balkans now became intensive, vigorous, and effective. From the end of the eighth century—and, particularly during the first half of the ninth—Byzantium succeeded in reconstituting her authority in a considerable portion of the Balkan peninsula. It is, however, only at first glance that the change seems sudden. In actual fact, it was the result of long and laborious struggles—mentioned sporadically in Byzantine chronicles—and of gradual, barely noticeable, internal shifts. The establishment of the different themes was only the final result of these shifts.

At one extremity the process embraced Greek territory. Probably by the end of the eighth century the new theme of the Peloponnesus was created alongside the existing one of Hellas.⁶ The theme of Cephalonia, including the Ionian Islands, was organized in the first years of the ninth century at the latest.⁷ At the other extremity, between 789 and 802, the theme of Macedonia was established, more or less contemporaneously with the Greek themes to the south.⁸ The Macedonian theme, however, had nothing in common with either classical Macedonia or that of modern times: this point must be made

² F. Dvornik, *Les légendes de Constantin et de Méthode vues de Byzance* (Prague, 1933), 3 ff.; St. Kyriakides, *Βυζαντινοὶ Μελέται* (Thessalonica, 1939), 29 ff.; P. Lemerle, *Philippe et la Macédoine orientale à l'époque chrétienne et byzantine* (Paris, 1945), 118 ff.

³ G. Ostrogorsky, "Postanak tema Helada i Peloponez," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta*, 1 (1952), 64 ff.; Cf. *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates* (1963), 162 ff.

⁴ See note 2 *supra*.

⁵ Cf. G. Ostrogorsky, "Postanak tema . . .," 65 ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 71 ff.

⁷ Cf. D. A. Zakythinos, "Le thème de Céphalonie et la défense de l'Occident," *L'hellénisme contemporain*, 8 (1954), 303 ff.

⁸ Cf. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, 122 ff.

clear, particularly because the question of Macedonia is of especial importance to our problem. The Byzantine theme of Macedonia consisted of western Thrace, with its center at Adrianople. The name "Macedonia" was attached to this territory precisely because actual Macedonia was lost to Byzantium, and was occupied by Slavs and formed a conglomeration of *Sclaviniae*.

In the first half of the ninth century—probably in its early years—the regions of Thessalonica and Dyrrachium were organized as themes. Both, along with the themes mentioned above, are cited in Uspenskij's *Tacticon*, compiled between 845 and 856.⁹ On the other hand, Dvornik has pointed out that the Life of *St. Gregory Decapolites*, which he edited, already mentions, about 836, the *strategus* of Thessalonica and his *protocancellarius*; from which Dvornik rightly concluded that the theme of Thessalonica originated at least before 836.¹⁰ The establishment of a theme in the Dyrrachium region probably took place in the first quarter of the ninth century, as was recently shown by Jadran Ferluga, who relied on an item of information in the correspondence of Theodore the Studite.¹¹ The institution of themes in the territories of Thessalonica and Dyrrachium was a particularly important step in strengthening the Byzantine position in the Balkans, since Dyrrachium was the main base of the Empire on the Adriatic coast, and Thessalonica was both the main stronghold on the Aegean Sea and, what is of particular importance in the present context, the Empire's principal gateway to the Slavic world. Hence, on the eve of the great mission of the brothers from Thessalonica, this city became the center of the most important theme of the Empire in the Balkans. Then Thessalonica was connected with the Thracian themes of Macedonia and Thrace by the creation of the theme of Strymon: this theme followed the coast between the rivers Strymon and Nestos, and its center was Serres.¹² At the other extremity, the formation of the Nicopolis theme, in Epirus, completed the network of the theme system on Greek territory. Finally, at the beginning of the reign of Basil I, the former *archontia* Dalmatia, which included the coastal cities and the nearby islands, acquired greater importance and was raised to the status of a theme.¹³ This was a decisive moment in the expansion of Byzantine influence in the western part of the Balkan Peninsula and in the Christianization of the Serbian lands.

This completed the main phase in the process of restoring Byzantine power in the Balkans—a process of political reoccupation that made possible a gradual, often very slow, re-Hellenization of the regained regions. Later Byzantine reoccupation, which absorbed almost all of the Balkan Peninsula in the tenth and eleventh centuries, was temporary and had no deep roots. The process of reoccupation which we have followed here did, on the contrary, have lasting

⁹ G. Ostrogorsky, "Taktikon Uspenskog i Taktikon Beneševića," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta*, 2 (1953), 40ff.

¹⁰ F. Dvornik, *La vie de Saint Grégoire le Décapolite* (Paris, 1926), pp. 36, 62.

¹¹ J. Fergula, "La création du thème de Dyrrachium," *Actes du XII^e Congrès d'études byzantines*, II (1964), 83ff.

¹² Cf. M. Rajković, "Oblast Strimona i tema Strimon," *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta*, 5 (1958), 1ff.

¹³ J. Ferluga, *Vizantiska uprava u Dalmaciji* (Belgrade, 1958, 68ff.

results. It divided the Balkan Peninsula forever into a Greek and a Slavic zone. By the second half of the ninth century, Byzantium had succeeded in strengthening her power not only in the entire southern part of the peninsula, but also in the more remote coastal regions accessible to her naval power. These regions included many old harbors and cities inhabited by the older Greek and Roman populations which the Slavic migration had driven there. The interior of the Balkan Peninsula, however, remained beyond the borders of Byzantium. Here, gradually, Slavic states arose: Bulgaria was formed and expanded, and new states were organized in the Serbian and Croatian regions. Thus ended the era of the *Sclaviniae*, which had marked the history of the Balkans from the seventh century to the middle of the ninth. Where Byzantine administrative power asserted itself, the *Sclaviniae* were eventually absorbed into the theme organization; in regions remaining outside Byzantine control they either merged into new Slavic states or joined existing ones.

Numerous Macedonian *Sclaviniae* joined Bulgaria, and thus the Bulgarian State came to extend over those territories of Macedonia which were not included within the Byzantine theme organization, i.e., by far the greater part of that region. The incorporation of Macedonia—the main area of the later activity of Methodius' disciples, with Ohrid as the principal center of old Slavic culture and literature—is a particularly salient factor in our study. The date of this incorporation cannot be accurately determined. We know only, in connection with the activities of Methodius' disciples, that at the time of Prince Boris western Macedonia, including Ohrid, was situated within the borders of the Bulgarian State.

In their efforts to determine when Bulgaria extended its hegemony over this territory, historians have resorted to a number of hypotheses—many of them fairly bold. The general pattern for the solution of this problem was proposed by the eminent Bulgarian historian Zlatarski.¹⁴ Assuming that the annexation of Macedonia by Bulgaria resulted from wars between the Bulgarian State and Byzantium, Zlatarski went to great pains to search the sources for information about these wars. But since there is no evidence of any wars in western Macedonia at that time, he chose to rely on a brief notice in the Chronicle of Symeon Logothetes which states that a Bulgarian ruler marched against Thessalonica. As this notice is inserted in the story of the return of Byzantine war prisoners deported in the time of Krum (among these prisoners were the later Emperor Basil I and his parents), Zlatarski dates the above-mentioned expedition against Thessalonica to 837, and ascribes it to Khan Presiam. This would have been the operation needed to bring about the annexation of western Macedonia to Bulgaria. Bury accepts this chronology,¹⁵ although he observes—cautiously, as always—that to attribute such results to this expedition is “a hypothesis that cannot be proved.”¹⁶ S. Runciman also

¹⁴ V. N. Zlatarski, “Izvestija za Bŭlgarite v hronikata na Simeona Metafrasta i Logoteta,” *Sbornik za narodni umotvoreenija i knižnina*, 24 (1908), and *Istorija na Bŭlgarskata Dŭržava prez srednite vekove* I, 1 (Sofia, 1918), 337ff.

¹⁵ J. B. Bury, *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire* (London, 1912), 370ff.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 372.

accepts Zlatarski's chronology and his basic hypothesis.¹⁷ This date, we are told, is particularly plausible, because the Byzantine Emperor Theophilus was at that time engaged in a major struggle against the Arabs and could not intervene. Mutačiev, in his turn, while also following Zlatarski's basic ideas, develops them in his own way. He does not mention the expedition against Thessalonica, but bases his conclusions on information provided by the well-known Shumen inscription, according to which the Bulgarian ruler (and he also believes it was Presiam) sent the prominent Bulgarian army commander Kavhan Isbul into the district of Serres. Mutačiev infers from this piece of evidence that a Byzantine army was concentrated there, with the task of instigating an attack in the West and forcing Slavic tribes in the area of the rivers Strymon and Vardar to submit again to Byzantium.¹⁸ Mutačiev attributes the supposed effectiveness of Isbul's mission to the fact that at that time—838, according to him—the Byzantines had to defend themselves against a massive Arab attack in Asia Minor which compelled them to withdraw forces from the West.¹⁹ However, according to Zlatarski and Bury, Isbul's expedition in the area of the Strymon and the Nestos did not take place until after the year 846.²⁰

Let us not dwell any longer on these contradictions, or on the fact that, in view of Bulgaria's annexation of the Macedonian *Sclaviniae*, some scholars attribute great importance to the Bulgarian ruler's campaign against Thessalonica, while others do not mention it at all; or on the fact that in this connection the latter authorities attach correspondingly great significance to the Shumen inscription, while the former completely disregard it. It is, nevertheless, strange that the *Sclaviniae* in western and central Macedonia should have been transferred from Byzantine to Bulgarian authority without the sources mentioning any military operations in those areas; while, *faute de mieux*, we are offered data on Bulgarian actions in the districts of Thessalonica and Serres—regions which, in fact, were not annexed to Bulgaria. It is important above all to realize how insufficient and vague is the available evidence. Information provided by the partially preserved Shumen inscription is not even entirely clear. Contrary to Jireček and Uspenskij, who published it, and to Bury who referred to "warlike action,"²¹ Zlatarski, in his final judgement

¹⁷ S. Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire* (London, 1930), 87.

¹⁸ P. Mutačiev, *Istorija na Bŭlgarskija narod*, I (Sofia, 1943), 160. See also P. Nikov, *Han Omortag i Kavhan Isbul* (Sofia [Bulg. Istor. Bibl.], n.d.).

¹⁹ The new history of Bulgaria published by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences combines these two pieces of evidence, and claims that the Kavhan Isbul was sent to the district of Thessalonica and "at the same time Isbul or some other Bulgarian army leader occupied all of central Macedonia, including part of southern Albania, without encountering serious resistance from the Byzantines who ruled these conquered regions." Cf. *Istorija na Bŭlgarija*, I (Sofia, 1954), 93. However, contrary to Zlatarski, T. Cankova-Petkova, in her article, "O territorii bolgarskogo gosudarstva v VII-IX vv.," *Viz. Vrem.*, 17 (1960), 143, note 118, points out that there is no actual evidence of any Bulgarian conquest of Macedonian territories at the time of Presiam. She is inclined to accept the hypothesis that these regions were annexed peacefully after their Christianization.

²⁰ Zlatarski, *Izvestija*, 52; Bury, *op. cit.*, 372, note 3, and Appendix 10. Later Zlatarski changed his opinion and assigned the Shumen inscription to 836-37 (*Istorija*, I 452f.), in order to refute Bury's conclusion that Malomir and Presiam were the same person.

²¹ C. Jireček in *Archäol.-Epigr. Mitteilungen*, 19 (1896), 242f.; F. I. Uspenskij in *Izvestija russk. arheol. inst. v Konstantinopole*, 10 (1905), 232f.; Bury, *op. cit.*, App. 10, p. 83.

on this inscription, did not believe that military operations were involved here.²² On the other hand, information supplied by Symeon Logothetes—which Zlatarski takes as a point of departure—is clear in its meaning. But Symeon says—and only in a subordinate clause—no more than that prisoners of war, with whom the whole story deals and who were deported at the time of Krum, were leaving for home with their belongings when Michael, prince of Bulgaria, moved against Thessalonica.²³ That is all. The most awkward riddle is the fact that this action, which modern scholars date to the end of the thirties, was, according to Symeon Logothetes, undertaken by Michael, i.e., Boris, who ascended the throne in 852. Zlatarski claims that the ruler in question was obviously Presiam, and that this event took place at the very beginning of his reign, after a recent change on the throne: for, in the same passage, two lines earlier, another Bulgarian ruler is mentioned: Symeon Logothetes calls him Vladimir and relates that he was Krum's grandson and the father of Symeon who reigned afterward.²⁴ Zlatarski claims that this Vladimir was in fact Malomir, since Malomir was Krum's grandson—and Bury and Runciman agree with him.²⁵ However, Symeon Logothetes states that this Bulgarian *archon* was not only Krum's grandson, but also the father and predecessor of the great Symeon. This cannot be reconciled at all with what we know of Malomir; whereas Vladimir was at least actually Symeon's predecessor, although not his father but his elder brother. We may add that Bury adduced powerful arguments to show that Malomir and Presiam were one and the same person, who reigned from 831 to 852; in which case there was no change at all on the Bulgarian throne in 836.²⁶

Is it not safer to accept the possibility that Symeon Logothetes simply confused the facts? He wrote about events that occurred a hundred years before his time, and he was obviously at sea in Bulgarian history of the first half of the ninth century, a period which baffles even the most authoritative modern historians. Is it not preferable to recognize his obvious ignorance than to construct extensive theories and complicated hypotheses on the basis of his confused evidence? The more involved hypotheses appear to be, the more arbitrary they usually are. In fact, they cannot be anything but arbitrary when they set out to prove assumptions that are inaccurate from the start. Hypotheses with which we have been dealing here were conceived on the assumption that the Macedonian *Sclaviniae*, before being annexed by Bulgaria, belonged to Byzantium; and they aimed to establish at what date and through what military actions Bulgaria won Macedonia from Byzantium. Scholars

²² Zlatarski, *Istorija*, I, 1, 457.

²³ Sym. Log., Georg. Mon. Cont. 818, 10. Old Church Slavonic translation ed. by Sreznevskij (1905), 101.

²⁴ Sym. Log., Georg. Mon. Cont. 818, 7. Old Church Slavonic translation, 101.

²⁵ Bury, *op. cit.*, 369, note 4. Runciman, *op. cit.*, 86, note 3.

²⁶ Bury, *op. cit.*, App. X. Zlatarski rejects this interpretation (*Istorija*, I, 1, App. 14) and insists that Malomir and Presiam were two different rulers and that Presiam succeeded Malomir. Discussing in detail the arguments of both parties in this matter, Runciman (*op. cit.*, App. VIII) adduces the hypothesis that Presiam was not a ruler, but a commander in the army of Malomir who, as Bury pointed out, was Omortag's successor and Boris' predecessor, and, therefore, reigned from 831 to 852.

have taken pains to extract from the sources everything that, in their opinion, could shed light on these questions. But their quest has been in vain, because the *Sclaviniae* in upper Macedonia had long since ceased to be under Byzantine rule; hence Bulgaria had no need to wrest them from Byzantium. This is why we find no record of any such conquest in the sources.

This fact only confirms what we stated above about conditions in the Balkans during the early Middle Ages. Byzantium lost control over the Balkan Peninsula after the migration of the Slavs. Later, up to the middle of the ninth century, the Byzantine Empire did succeed in gradually establishing its power over part of the Balkans, even over some districts of lower Macedonia—those adjoining the larger urban centers. However, the greater part of Macedonia and the greater portion of the Balkan Peninsula—the whole of the interior—remained outside its control. While the *Sclaviniae* within the territories reoccupied by Byzantium gradually submitted to her administrative apparatus and were slowly Hellenized, those that remained outside the Byzantine borders either gradually developed into independent Slavic states or joined the already existing Bulgarian State. This was a lengthy process which cannot be accurately dated. It can only be stated that it was largely completed by the reign of Boris, when the greater part of Macedonia was included within the Bulgarian State. I do not mean to imply that it all happened quietly and peacefully. Just as the subordination of the *Sclaviniae* to Byzantine rule in the southern part of the peninsula was preceded by actions of the Byzantine army, so it is probable that armed force was used in this case also—not to seize Macedonian *Sclaviniae* from Byzantium, but to subject them to the power of the Bulgarian State; and this is why Byzantine sources provide no information on the subject.

Byzantine reoccupation of Balkan territories after an almost complete disaster at the time of the Slavic migration was certainly a great accomplishment, and demonstrates the extraordinary vitality of the Byzantine Empire. It not only created conditions for the gradual re-Hellenization of the reconquered regions, but also provided a solid foundation for the Empire's activities in other Balkan and non-Balkan territories. It is true that the Byzantine reoccupation went no further than the outer boundaries of homogeneous Slavic lands in the Balkan interior. The military and administrative power of Byzantium did not extend over these countries. However, by encircling them with Imperial themes and by strengthening the position of cities bordering on Slavic territories, Byzantium began, from these strongholds, vigorously to spread her influence over the Slavic interior.

Changes in the ecclesiastical field which took place during this period of transition contributed to the effectiveness of this expansion. Constantinople was not the only center of diffusion of Byzantine religious and cultural influence among neighboring peoples. It shared this role with Thessalonica above all, and also with the cities of the Adriatic coast. Yet, almost all of the Balkan Peninsula—not just the western part, but its interior as well, that is, Illyricum with its center in Thessalonica—remained under the jurisdiction of the Roman

See until the middle of the eighth century. The age of Iconoclasm brought about vital changes in the relations between Byzantium and the Church of Rome. The Roman Church did not accept the Iconoclastic doctrine of the Byzantine imperial government. However, in the relations between Rome and Constantinople the ultimately decisive factor was, even more than the doctrinal element, the political situation in Italy created by the growing Lombard invasion. Pope Gregory II firmly repudiated the Iconoclastic doctrines of the Emperor Leo III, as did his successors. But, regardless of the conflict over the most sensitive religious issue of the time, Gregory II and his successors Gregory III and Zacharias remained politically loyal to the emperor as long as there was hope that Byzantium would be able to suppress the Lombard danger in Italy. This hope was finally dashed by the fall of Ravenna to the Lombards in 751. Rome turned her back on Byzantium and placed herself under the protection of the Frankish king. Pope Stephen II met King Pippin in Ponthion and entered into an alliance with him which marked a new direction in the development of the West. Byzantium was finally pushed back from northern and central Italy. In its turn, however, the Byzantine government removed the Hellenized regions of southern Italy and the Balkan Peninsula from Roman jurisdiction and placed them under the Church of Constantinople.

Bearing in mind the development of Roman-Byzantine relations which we have briefly described, it seems to me that Grumel was right in concluding that this measure was taken not at the time of Leo III and Pope Gregory II, as has been generally thought until recently, but only after the fall of the exarchate of Ravenna, at the time of Stephen II and the Emperor Constantine V.²⁷ In fact, Theophanes, describing with much exaggeration the conflict between Leo III and Gregory II, does not so much as mention the separation of the Balkan and southern Italian regions from Rome. I am sorry to disagree on this question with Anastos, the distinguished authority on the Iconoclastic period, who defends the old chronology.²⁸ I am not convinced that Theophanes did not confuse events even when he ascribed the confiscation of the papal patrimonies in southern Italy to Leo III and presented this measure as the result of the conflict between Leo III and Gregory II on the issue of the cult of icons. Let us not forget how sketchy and confused were Theophanes' notions about everything regarding conditions in the West, particularly about the Roman pontiffs and their chronology. Theophanes mentions Pope Stephen II, and what he terms the Pope's "flight to Pippin," under the year 724-25; in other words, he antedates Stephen's pontificate by thirty years.²⁹

But, whether this event occurred during the reign of Leo III or that of Constantine V, the fact is that the Balkan Peninsula, originally for the most part

²⁷ V. Grumel, "L'annexion de l'Illyricum oriental, de la Sicile et de la Calabre au patriarcat de Constantinople," *Recherches de science religieuse*, 40 (1952), 191ff.

²⁸ M. V. Anastos, "The Transfer of Illyricum, Calabria and Sicily to the Jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 732-33," in *Silloge Bizantina in onore di S. G. Mercati* (Rome, 1957), 14ff.

²⁹ Cf. G. Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Empire in the World of the Seventh Century," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 13 (1959), 13, note 32.

under the jurisdiction of Rome, fell, during the Iconoclastic period, together with the southern Italian regions, under the jurisdiction of Constantinople.³⁰ Thus, the main Byzantine centers in the Balkans, and especially Thessalonica, whose bishops had until then been considered vicars of the Pope, entered the realm of the Byzantine Church. Thus, even those regions which Byzantium was able to reoccupy only at a later date came within the orbit of its Church. Furthermore, important territories which the Byzantine Empire was quite unable to subdue politically in the period which is of interest to us here, also entered the sphere of the patriarchate of Constantinople.

In evaluating the importance of the annexation of Illyricum to the patriarchate of Constantinople, almost everyone who has discussed the matter has stressed that by this measure the boundaries of the jurisdiction of the Constantinopolitan Church were made to correspond to the political borders of the Byzantine Empire. This, however, is not correct, even though it has been asserted by the leading authorities in the field of Byzantine political and Church history. At the time of its annexation to the patriarchate of Constantinople, Illyricum indeed represented a congeries of *Sclaviniae*, whereas Byzantine sovereignty over these regions was at most only nominal. Even the successes of Byzantine reoccupation at the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century were limited mainly to the southern part of this area. In other words, by the change of boundaries in the Roman and Byzantine ecclesiastical spheres, the domain of the patriarchate of Constantinople was extended considerably beyond the actual boundaries of the Empire, and encompassed lands which were out of reach of the Byzantine military and administrative authorities, and which were situated *in partibus infidelium*. The importance of this expansion was demonstrated only in the post-Iconoclastic era, when the religious and cultural influences of Byzantium were vigorously spreading over these, as well as more remote, regions. How important a gain this measure of the Iconoclastic government represented for Byzantium, and how real was the ensuing loss for Rome, is evidenced by the strong protests of the Roman Church, especially bitter after the defeat of Iconoclasm. From the well-known letter which Pope Hadrian II wrote to the Byzantine emperors it can be clearly seen that the news of the restoration of the cult of icons was greeted in Rome with mixed feelings, since the other measures of the Iconoclastic era were not revoked: the former boundaries of Roman jurisdiction were not re-established, nor were the Papal patrimonies in southern Italy returned to Rome.³¹

The Iconoclastic epoch emphasized sharply the frontiers between the Byzantine and the Roman spheres of influence, and this is the main feature of that period in the relations between Rome and Constantinople. Thus clear

³⁰ H. Gelzer ("Das Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche in Byzanz," *Hist. Z.*, 86 [1901], 193 ff.); L. M. Hartmann (*Geschichte Italiens im Mittelalter*, II, 2 [1903], 111 ff.); and, especially, F. Šišić (*Povijest Hrvata* [Zagreb, 1925], 681 ff.), have already, and rightly, stressed that by this action of the Iconoclast Byzantine government not only the Prefecture of Illyricum, but also Dalmatia—particularly the cities—were placed under the jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Constantinople.

³¹ *Mansi*, XII, 1055 f.

expression was given to what had been previously foreshadowed. Political, cultural, and even linguistic developments were leading inexorably to ever deeper differences between these two centers of the world and to ever greater mutual estrangement, and the clash between universalist ambitions on both sides was unavoidable. In the world of that time there were two powers, each with a strongly expressed belief in its own universal mission: one was secular—the Byzantine Empire, which claimed, as the only legal empire, the right to rule over the world; the other was spiritual—the Roman Church, with its claim to supremacy over Christendom. The universalism of either side could have been maintained as long as the world, at least the Christian world, was united. When that unity disappeared, the universalism of both powers inevitably became open to question. Neither side ever retreated ideologically from its universalistic aspirations. In actual fact, Byzantine universalism was already condemned to extinction after the downfall of Justinian's empire. It was definitely doomed after the fall of the exarchate of Ravenna, when Italy broke away from Byzantine rule and the Roman Church turned to the Frankish Kingdom. In the year 800, by crowning Charles the Great emperor, Rome created a second empire in the West. Meanwhile, as we have seen, the Roman Church was losing ground in the East. The emancipation of the West from the political sovereignty of Byzantium had its counterpart in the emancipation of the East from the supremacy of the Roman Church. The Iconoclastic age buried the universalism of the Byzantine State, but it also paved the way for the end of the universalism of the Roman Church. As the empire of Charles the Great rose up in the West as an opponent of Byzantine universalism, so also the impetus of the patriarchate of Constantinople emerged as a force that was soon to challenge the universalism of the Roman Church.

Pope Hadrian protested in vain against the extension of the boundaries of Constantinople's jurisdiction for which previous events had prepared the way. Useless was his protest, in the letter mentioned above, against the title Oecumenical Patriarch which the heads of the Church of Constantinople had assumed long before. True, there were times when the ecclesiastical centers within the Eastern Church itself were engaged in bitter mutual struggles over church leadership. It had looked sometimes as if Constantinople would bow, if not to Antioch, then to powerful Alexandria. Unlike these rivals, famous for their great traditions, Constantinople had no Church tradition to speak of. But Constantinople was the capital of the Empire, and this fact decided the struggle in her favor. Her primacy in the Eastern Church was established in the canons of the oecumenical councils. And when the illustrious eastern patriarchal sees fell under the rule of the infidel Saracen, only the memory of their glory survived. The patriarch of Constantinople became in fact the sole head of the Byzantine Church, and this influenced his position also toward the see of Rome, particularly as his importance and authority continued to increase. The Iconoclastic crisis, which had placed the patriarchate of Constantinople in a difficult position of dependence upon a heretical government, was over. Now the Byzantine Church enjoyed the support of a strong and like-minded govern-

ment which upheld her efforts to achieve a sovereign position in the Christian world and to expand her influence beyond that world. Great new perspectives opened up before her.

The seventh and eighth centuries were a time of struggle for survival and of a marked contraction of the Byzantine horizon and cultural activities. From the middle of the ninth century, however, perspectives widened considerably: a new age had arrived, the age of a powerful upsurge of Byzantine culture and of the spread of its influence abroad. The decade of extraordinary achievement lay ahead.

Historically, everything we have examined here represents conditions essential to the accomplishments of this great decade: the internal strengthening of the Byzantine state and the growth of its military power; the change which, in the sixties of the ninth century, gave a favorable turn to the wars with the Arabs; the reoccupation of the coastal regions of the Balkan Peninsula; the gradual restoration of order in the Balkans and the re-establishment of the formerly disturbed balance of power; the inclusion of the entire Balkan Peninsula within the jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Constantinople; the increase of influence and authority of Constantinople in the Christian Church. All these developments prepared the way for the outstanding achievements of the Byzantine State and Church, and also led to the powerful expansion of Byzantine religious and cultural influences that took place during the years of the remarkable activity of the Patriarch Photius, of Caesar Bardas, and of Constantine and Methodius, the "Apostles of the Slavs."

The cultural development that took place at that time in Byzantium itself was, of course, necessary for the powerful radiation of Byzantine culture in the outside world. We should remember that cultural life in Byzantium in the middle of the ninth century became extremely active and reached a very high level. The enlightened regent Caesar Bardas founded a university at the Magnaura Palace, to which he brought the most eminent scholars. With astonishing boldness he entrusted the school's leadership to the great scholar and former Iconoclast, Leo the Mathematician. This university adorned with the names of the most illustrious scholars and teachers, Leo and Photius, and in which the young philosopher Constantine studied and taught, became the focal point of mediaeval Greek science and culture and the center of its powerful radiation.

Constantine was one of the most remarkable personalities in this intellectual upsurge of the Byzantine Empire. Both philosopher and theologian, he was endowed with all the secular and theological knowledge of his day, and was the exponent of the highest aspirations of the Byzantine State and Church. He and his brother Methodius were at the same time typical of the Byzantine-Slav symbiosis which existed at that time in the Balkans. Nowhere was this symbiosis as pronounced as in their native Thessalonica, the most important center on the fringe of the Slavic world. The population of Thessalonica was then practically bilingual, as often happens in border regions. According to a statement in the *Life* of Constantine (chap. 5), everyone in Thessalonica spoke Slavic.

It need hardly be emphasized how important the knowledge of the Slavic language was for the brothers' task. Had they not preached and celebrated the liturgy in Slavic, had they not created an alphabet and translated the Bible and the liturgical books into Slavic, their work would have remained an episode without further significance. Because they did these things, however, their mission, while in the end unsuccessful in Moravia itself, acquired great impetus and significance in other Slavic lands, and laid the foundation for Slavic literacy, literature, and culture.

It is interesting to note that in the Balkan regions, which the Empire incorporated within its own boundaries by gradual submission of the *Sclaviniae*, the Byzantine Church was a powerful factor in the Hellenization of the Slavic population. Thus, for instance, after the famous siege of Patras by the Slavs in 805, the Emperor Nicephorus I ordered the defeated Slavs to be assigned as *paroikoi* to the church of St. Andrew in Patras because that Saint had saved the city from the great peril of the Slavic invasion.³² In Moravia, on the other hand, the Byzantines preached Christianity and celebrated Mass in the Slavic language: here the Byzantine State and Church administrations deliberately supported Slavic self-consciousness, thus intentionally opposing the influence of the neighboring Frankish kingdom. The *Lives* of Constantine and Methodius constantly emphasize the inherent value of the Slavic language and attack the "trilingual heresy," i.e., the theory that the revealed truth of the Christian Church can be expressed only in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. This broadminded spirit characterized to a great extent the Church policy of Byzantium in other Slavic countries as well.

To sum up, the circumstances which made possible the great Byzantine achievements in the Slavic world were numerous and diverse. We have had to follow through centuries the development of the Byzantine Empire to be able to understand the way in which these conditions matured. We have also had to observe in the earlier political, ecclesiastical, and cultural history of Byzantium those developments which prepared the Moravian mission and other similar phenomena. The Moravian mission is one of a series of like phenomena which with amazing rapidity succeeded one another in the seventh decade of the ninth century.

The achievements of that time, forerunners of further similar accomplishments, originated in the years when the Byzantine Empire was led by Michael III and his uncle, the great Caesar Bardas; while the great Patriarch Photius was at the head of the Byzantine Church. Their personal part in these achievements obviously was not small, and Constantine and Methodius must share the credit for their great work with the Patriarch Photius and Caesar Bardas, the inspirers and leaders of Byzantine policy at that time. However, in the realization of the historical interests and primordial stirrings of a great empire, there is something deeper and more powerful than personal will, initiative, and perseverance. The actions initiated at the time of Michael III, Bardas, and Photius were continued faithfully and with equal success under

³² *De adm. imp.*, chap. 49, ed. by Moravcsik-Jenkins.

Basil I, who seized supreme power after the assassination of Bardas and Michael, and immediately dismissed Photius. Basil's policy toward the Slavic world did not substantially differ from that of his predecessors and victims. The policies differed somewhat in their methods, but not in the goals they pursued.

It was not my intention to describe the events of the great decade, which, in the main, are fairly well known. My purpose, rather, was to point to their roots and to stress their historical inevitability. I shall mention only briefly a few facts which clearly illustrate this inevitability. After the Russian attack on Constantinople in 860, Byzantium began missionary activities in Russia. A few years later, in 867, in his famous encyclical letter to the eastern patriarchs, Photius with justifiable pride—though also with obvious exaggeration—emphasized the success of that endeavor.³³ Basil I continued this line of action. Constantine Porphyrogenitus was even inclined to give his grandfather credit for Christianizing the Russians. These, of course, are panegyric exaggerations, but there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of his information that Basil I ordered his patriarch Ignatius, Photius' rival, to send an archbishop to the Russians.³⁴ The conflict with the Russians in 860 was followed by the embassy which Byzantium dispatched to her old allies, the Khazars. The diplomatic mission was entrusted to the young philosopher Constantine, and this is when this greatest propagator of Byzantine culture made his first appearance on the stage of history. After that came the mission of the Thessalonican brothers to Moravia at the invitation of Prince Rastislav, who, threatened by the Frankish-Bulgarian alliance, sent his historical appeal to Byzantium. There followed the Christianization of the Bulgarians whom Byzantium forced to repudiate their alliance with the Frankish Kingdom and to accept Christianity from Constantinople. Shortly thereafter, however, Bulgaria turned her back on Byzantium and approached Rome. The struggle over the Bulgarian Church greatly increased the acuteness of the conflict between the Patriarch Photius and Pope Nicholas I, and led to a sharp split between Constantinople and Rome. At the very moment when this dramatic change occurred, a coup d'état took place in Constantinople. Basil became the autocrat of Byzantium. It was he, the assassin of Michael and Bardas and the adversary of Photius, who finally won the struggle over the Bulgarian Church and brought into effect the decision in favor of Byzantium, accepted at the final session of the same council that confirmed Photius' deposition. Thus, a loss which would have been of immense consequence for Byzantium was avoided. Moreover, a base which was later to be used for the cultural activities of Methodius' disciples was thereby included in the sphere of the Byzantine Church, and the future of the Slavic liturgy and its dissemination throughout the sphere of the Byzantine Church were assured. Had things turned out differently; had Bulgaria and Macedonia—including the Ohrid district, the area of the activity of Clement and Naum—remained under the wing of the Roman Church, a successful

³³ Migne, PG, 102, cols. 736/7, Epist. 13.

³⁴ *Vita Const.*, Theoph. Cont., 342.

future for the Slavic liturgy would have been hardly imaginable. On the other hand, from the very beginning of Basil's reign, Byzantine influence penetrated in full strength to the western region of the Balkans, especially to the Serbian lands. Here its expansion took a peculiar turn. The consolidation of the Byzantine position on the Adriatic was of decisive importance. Besieged by the Arab fleet, Dubrovnik sent an appeal for help to Constantinople. Addressed to the Emperor Michael, this appeal reached the new Emperor, who had just ascended the throne after assassinating Michael. Basil did what his predecessor would most probably have done: he sent the fleet to assist Dubrovnik, forcing the Arabs to raise their siege and to leave the Adriatic waters. The reinforcement of Byzantine authority on the Adriatic shore facilitated the penetration of the political, religious, and cultural influences of the Empire into the Slavic lands of the West Balkans. In the ensuing years, the Serbian lands officially accepted the Byzantine religion, and the Slavic liturgy was definitely established after the arrival of Methodius' disciples and the diffusion of the Slavic liturgy from Clement's and Naum's Ohrid.

To stress the important point once more, the Moravian mission was not an isolated phenomenon. It was one of a series of similar, contemporary phenomena resulting from the same historical conditions. The work of the "Apostles of the Slavs" which resulted from this mission acquired its true and deep significance in the events which occurred simultaneously in Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Serbia, and which later took place in the greatest of the Slavic countries—Russia.